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ABSTRACT

An analysis of survey data collected at Bowling Green State University during the years 1973 to 1976 found that the objectives, attitudes, and background characteristics of successive classes of entering freshmen have remained very stable. While differences between men and women on certain traits are at times fairly large, the magnitude of the differences have also remained constant. Entering freshman classes have become increasingly pragmatic, concerned with entry-level job training. They are also increasingly agreeing with the use of grades and fewer indicate an interest in active societal involvement. There is an increasing trend for students to apply to and be accepted at other college and universities, even though they eventually do attend Bowling Green State University. Several implications of the data are considered for program planning and class composition. (MSE)

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FRESHMEN: A PORTRAIT OF STABILITY
(General Background, Expectations and Attitudes of Incoming Freshmen at Bowling Green State University, 1973-76)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT 1

INTRODUCTION 1

PROCEDURE 3

HOW AND WHY DO OUR FRESHMEN SELECT BGSU? 4

WHO ARE OUR FRESHMAN STUDENTS 5

SELF-RATINGS OF ACADEMIC ABILITIES 7

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS AND CAREER PLANNING 8

WHAT ARE THE ESTIMATES OF FRESHMEN CONCERNING THEIR EXPERIENCE AT BGSU? 9

FRESHMAN STUDENT OBJECTIVES 10

POLITICAL OBSERVATIONS 12

GENERAL ATTITUDES OF BGSU FRESHMEN 13

GENERAL ORIENTATION 17

CONCLUSION 21

CHANGES FROM 1973 TO 1976 22

GENERAL COMMENT 23

IMPLICATIONS 25

ABSTRACT

An analysis of survey data collected during the years 1973 to 1976 found that the objectives, attitudes and background characteristics of successive classes of entering freshmen have remained very stable. While differences between men and women on certain traits are at times fairly large, the magnitude of the differences have also remained constant.

Over the four-year period, entering Bowling Green students display a similar profile -- they are students recently graduated from high school, have a B to B+ average, and classify themselves as "middle-of-the-road" politically. In comparison to the national norms, they also maintain a low academic self-concept.

The data indicate that entering freshman classes have become increasingly pragmatic, i.e., concerned with entry-level job training. While the 1973 group rated the objective "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" as most important, the 1976 group gave that designation to the objective "becoming an authority in my field." Entering freshmen are also increasingly agreeing with the use of grades and fewer indicate they are interested in active societal involvement.

Also noteworthy, there is an increasing trend for students to apply and be accepted at other colleges and universities even though they eventually do attend BGSU.

Several implications of the data are considered. It is fairly clear that due to the disproportionate number of women and the number of students interested in business and education that we should proceed with caution when comparing entering BGSU students to national samples. They may deviate considerably. Another general implication is that entering freshman classes reflect rather small changes in their interests, attitudes, and perceived abilities. Planning activities can proceed on that assumption; on the other hand, if new dimensions within the freshman class are desired, considerable effort will have to be made to change their composition.

FIGURES

Figure 1, Page 7A	Percentage of Respondents
Figure 2, Page 8A	Percentage of Respondents Indicatin Business
Figure 3, Page 8B	Percentage of Respondents Indicatin Education
Figure 4, Page 12B	Student Orientations (Percentages)

TABLES

Table 1, Page 9A	Students Estimate Chances
Table 2, Page 10A	Objectives Considered Essential or Very Important
Table 3, Page 12A	Political Orientations of Incoming Students
Table 4, Page 17A	General Attitudes
Table 5, Page 18A	Response to Questions
Table 6, Page 19A	Faculty-Student Relationship
Table 7, Page 20	What Students Believe

I. Introduction

The romantic image suggests that young people come to college with open, inquiring minds seeking "the knowledge most worth having." The popular image of today differs radically from that notion. It characterizes persons who come to college as seeking vocational training and often lacking in the most minimal essential skills. Conventional wisdom suggests that somewhere in between those two extremes exists the majority of college students; neither scholars nor unskilled serfs to careerism.

For the last four years, the University has collected data on its freshmen through the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, a research project sponsored by the American Council on Education. The objectives of this report are to: (a) present an analysis of the data in terms of trends and patterns detectable between 1973-1976, (b) to discuss the nature of identified changes, and (c) to present certain implications of those changes for the University.

No matter how much fun people have discussing erratic and unusual student behaviors ("you wouldn't believe what this student said, did, wrote, etc."), we assume that we all share the belief that students should not be treated as non-entities or as simply products of an academic system. Students come with unique backgrounds, values, aspirations, and talents that are relevant to the teaching/learning process and which, in the end, impact upon the general life of the community. That students are necessary to keep the University economically viable is understood also. Many of us within a post-secondary educational setting have gone out of our way in the last several years to counteract the "case against college" promoted by the communication media. We believe that a college education does have significant value, both to the learner and to society.

Consistent with this belief, the University Division of General Studies has promoted the idea that a sound liberal education, in effect, can act as a "survival kit" for the rest of one's life.

Data collected during Freshman Orientation since 1973 have provided us with a portrait of our freshman students, their general characteristics and attitudes.* Although the last four years have been marked by the Watergate period and the energy crisis, we do not know the degree to which freshman responses have been significantly affected by them. Perhaps the most consistent external forces acting on the data have been the changing role of women in our society and the cyclical job market. The implementation of a new college at BGSU has also probably had an effect on the type of student coming to BGSU and therefore some of the answers regarding academic choices. While we anticipated few radical changes to be uncovered, we did, nevertheless, believe that this analysis was important as Bowling Green prepares for the 1980's and plans for the implementation of the Freshman Experience.

In addition to being sensitive to student demands and needs in order to provide a programmatic response, Bowling Green must also know what services the University should be providing to students once they are admitted. These two areas of University responsiveness should help Bowling Green maintain its share of the college-age population. It also seems reasonable to acquire a definite understanding of the goals and objectives of our students. Can the University be reconciled to the needs of students and their goals? Should we pretend university life goes on without such interdependence? All of the collegiate experience is, of course, aimed at one practical and

* In the years discussed, an average of 87% of the incoming students have completed the questionnaires. This figure represents 2,954 students in 1973, 3,194 in 1974, 2,848 in 1975, and 2,751 in 1976. The total number of students that have taken the questionnaire is 11,747.

achievable goal: to further develop practices and strategies that promote intellectual, personal, and social growth of students.

The student characteristics arrayed here are only one part of an incredibly complex equation that results in the BGSU graduate. These data and the accompanying discussion are presented in the hope that they can help to further develop such practices and strategies. We believe it is better to know what freshman students say about themselves rather than not to know.

II. Procedure

The procedure used in writing this report was to review the reports of the past years and array the data by year so that trends and patterns could easily be recognized.* A definition of "significant change" was established as a change of five percentage points or more between or among years. We were selective in what is discussed here for two reasons: (1) some of the data have little general interest (e.g., extensive financial aid analyses), and (2) some data have little relevance to policy issues (e.g., religious background). Choices of what to include or exclude could be argued, but we believe most of the pertinent data from the annual surveys have been included. A decision not to utilize correlation or factor analysis techniques was made in order to spend most of the time on a rather straightforward and uncomplicated analysis.

The first part of the report concentrates on the general demographic background of our students. Overall orientations toward college, life,

* An initial review of the data was completed by three graduate students in College Student Personnel; Mark Frankart, Larry Davis, and Paul Shrode. Their contributions to this effort are gratefully acknowledged.

career, and the attitudes they bring to BGSU are then discussed. The latter portion of the report is devoted to a discussion of the findings and the development of a set of implications. Charts and tables are used sparingly in the document in an effort to keep them out of the way of the reader. Throughout the report, comparisons of Bowling Green freshman responses are made against 1976 national norms. (National normative data were reviewed for each year from 1973 and significant changes were noted.)

III. A. "How and Why Do Our Freshmen Select BGSU?"

Although the ranking of BGSU as the institution of their first choice has remained consistent for approximately 85% of our freshmen, the percentage who apply to and receive acceptance from "one other" institution has increased from 28% in 1973 to 39% in 1976. In addition, the percentage receiving acceptance at "three other" institutions fluctuated from 13% in 1973 to 10% in 1975 and returned to 13% in 1976. This is consistent with the national norm data. In marked contrast to the 49% of BGSU freshmen who in 1973 received no additional acceptances are the 39% in 1976 who were in this same category.

Freshmen at Bowling Green consistently cite a "good academic reputation" as a reason noted as very important in selecting BGSU. However, a decreasing trend has evolved. Sixty-five percent of our freshmen checked this reason in 1973 compared to 53% in 1976. Another decreasing pattern among reasons considered very important can be detected for "advice of someone who attended." Twenty-eight percent checked this reason in 1973 compared to 18% in 1976.

A more stable pattern of responses surrounds "offers special educational programs" cited by 26% of BGSU freshmen in 1973 and 24% in 1976. "Advice

of guidance counselor" has fluctuated somewhat; 6% of BGSU freshman respondents checked this in 1973, 7% in 1974, and 5% both in 1975 and 1976.

Only the 1976 questionnaire contained an item requesting an indication of which reasons were considered "very important" in deciding to go to college. Our freshmen closely approximated responses within the national norm grouping with the exception of only 29% of BGSU students checking "prepare for graduate school" compared with 47% of the national group. "Learn more about things" was a reason cited by 70% of our students and 75% of the normative groups. "Able to get a better job" was checked by 73% of BGSU freshmen and 68% of the national population. Parents are still a significant influential factor in decisions to attend college. Twenty-eight percent of our freshmen say so and 28% of the national group also checked "parents wanted me to go."

B. Who Are Our Freshman Students?

Of all the BGSU freshmen who responded to the ACE Survey, an average of 99% of them begin their collegiate program in the September immediately following their high school graduation. The average percentage of entering freshmen who were enrolled in a college preparatory program while in high school was 94% over the past four years. Consistently, their records of academic achievement during high school have shown men to be within the B- category and women in the B+ category.

The vast majority of our freshman students completing the questionnaire are Caucasian (95%), with the representation of Black/Negro/Afro-American decreasing from 7% in 1974 to 3% in 1976. However, respondents who were enrolled in the Student Development Program usually have had a scheduling conflict during Freshman Orientation and most have not been able to respond to the questionnaire. Freshman student respondents have

also been predominantly women. This is inconsistent with national norms that indicate a somewhat even distribution of men and women respondents, e.g., 1976 (men 52% and women 48%).

When asked to estimate annual parental income, the largest single group of 1976 freshman students, 215, responded $15,000-$19,999. A significant trend appears to be developing concerning parental income. Within the response category "$10,000-$12,499" the percentage response rate among all freshmen has dropped from 17% to 9%. Likewise, the response rate selecting "$12,500-$14,999" has dropped from 18% to 12%. At the other end of the scale, the percentage of students indicating "$20,000-$24,999" has increased (14% to 18% and 7% to 11% respectively). In each of these latter two instances, the Bowling Green pattern shows a four times greater and a two times greater increase, respectively, than the national norms.

As would be expected from the above, fewer freshmen have cited "some" concern over their ability to finance their college education since 1973, 55% indicated some concern in 1973 while 50% did so in 1976. In addition, the percentage of freshmen who answered "$2,000-$4,000" as an estimate of expected parental support has increased steadily from 25% in 1973 to 33% in 1976.

Although the most frequently reported distance from the student's home to his/her college or university in the national norms is "51 to 100 miles," the most frequently reported distance between home and Bowling Green was "101 to 500 miles" for our freshmen.

Concerning the highest level of education achieved by parents over the four years, 31% of fathers and 46% of mothers are high school graduates. In 1973, 22% of fathers had degrees while in 1976 this percentage increased to 26%. The percentage of mothers with college degrees has increased slightly from 16% in 1973 to 18% in 1976.

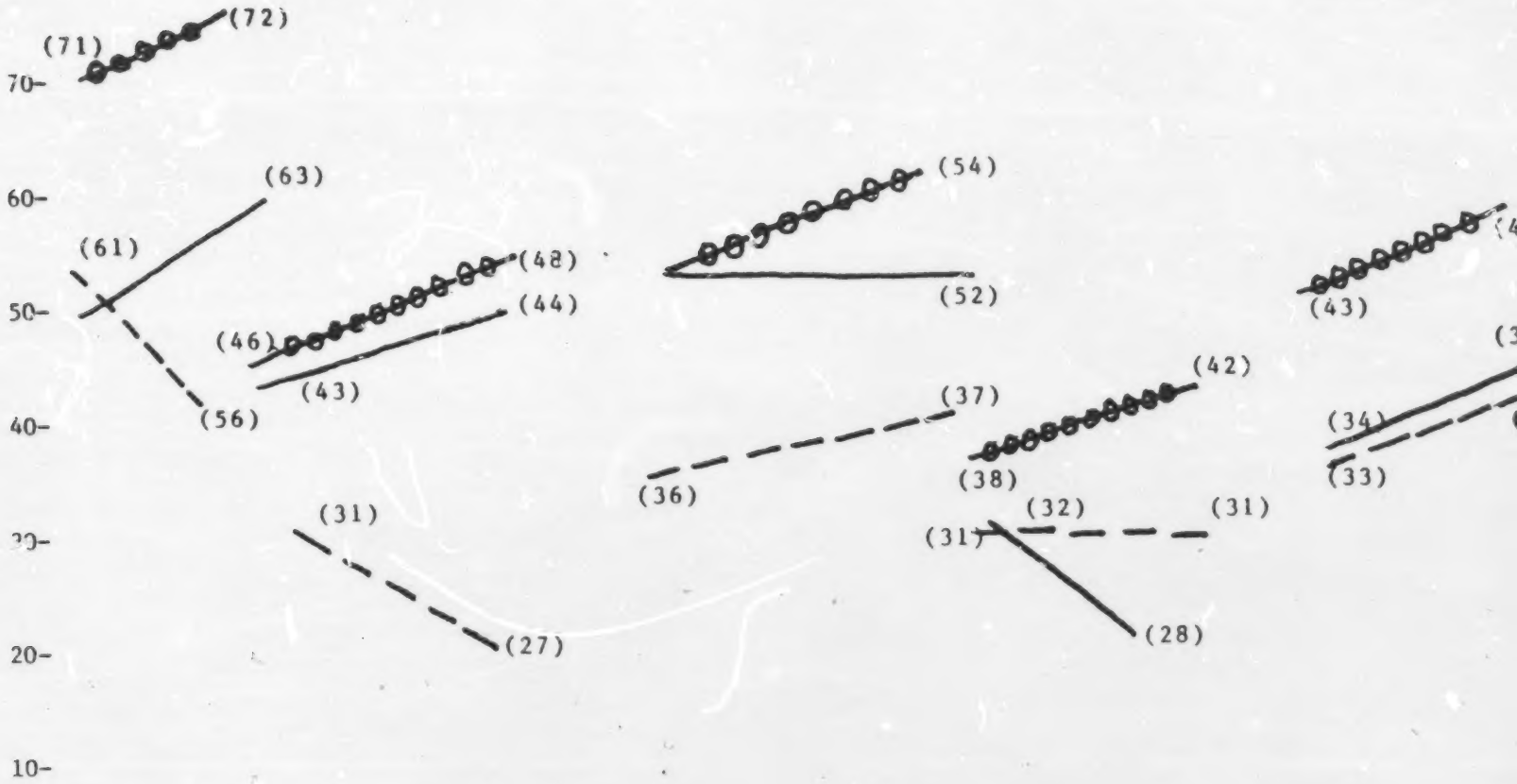
C. Self-Ratings of Academic Abilities

How do BGSU freshmen perceive their ability to handle academic tasks? The general answer to this is, compared to national norms, not very well. In both 1974 and 1976, students were asked to rate themselves on a series of traits as "you really think you are" compared to the average student of your own age. The percentages discussed here are those for students who rated themselves "above average" for two of the categories on a five-point scale. Five traits are presented here: (1) academic ability, (2) mathematical ability, (3) originality, (4) writing ability, and (5) intellectual self-confidence.

What is apparent from a review of the data in Figure I is that BGSU students rate themselves about ten percentage points lower than do students in the national norms. In each case, this percentage of difference increased from 1974 to 1976. In 1976, 59% of the Bowling Green freshmen saw their academic ability as "above average" while 72% of the students in the national norms rated themselves similarly. In 1974 and 1976, men at BGSU generally rated themselves higher than did women. This was especially true for the concepts of math ability and intellectual self-confidence. Also in 1974, BGSU freshmen ratings of above average academic ability were about equal, 60% men and 61% women. However, in 1976, more men rated themselves above average than did women, 63% men and 56% women. For the traits of writing ability and originality, almost an equal percentage of men and women rated themselves above average.

Percentage of Respondents

Giving Above Average Self-Ratings (1974, 1976)



13

ACADEMIC ABILITY | MATHEMATICAL ABILITY | INTELLECTUAL SELF-CONFIDENCE | WRITING ABILITY | ORIGINALITY

BGSU Male

BGSU Female

Nat'l Norms

14

D. Academic Expectations and Career Planning

1. Kind of College Degree Program(s) Planned

Although the percentage of our freshmen planning to earn the BA/BS as their highest degree at Bowling Green has remained fairly consistent (above the 75% level), the percentage describing the MA/MS as their highest degree planned here has shown a slight increase from 1973 to 1976 (14% to 16%).

Since 1973, the percentage of BGSU freshmen who foresee the BA/BS as the highest degree planned anywhere has increased from 36% to 47%. Corresponding to this has been the fact that the MA/MS or PhD/EdD as highest degree planned anywhere has decreased in response rate from 47% to 40%.

2. Choice of Probable Field of Study

Two fields of study chosen most frequently by our freshmen over the past four years have been "Business" (27%) and "Education" (32%). Comparisons of this pattern with national norm group responses are described in Figure 2, page 8A for Business and in Figure 3, page 8B for Education.

As can be seen, dramatic differences occurred when comparing Bowling Green freshmen with national men; slightly more than twice the Bowling Green males indicated "Business" as a probable field of study as did men in the national sample. However, freshman women at BGSU more closely approximated the national women group and evidenced a slight increase in selecting "Business."

FIGURE 2
PAGE -8A-

Percentage of Respondents Indicating Business
As Probable Field of Study

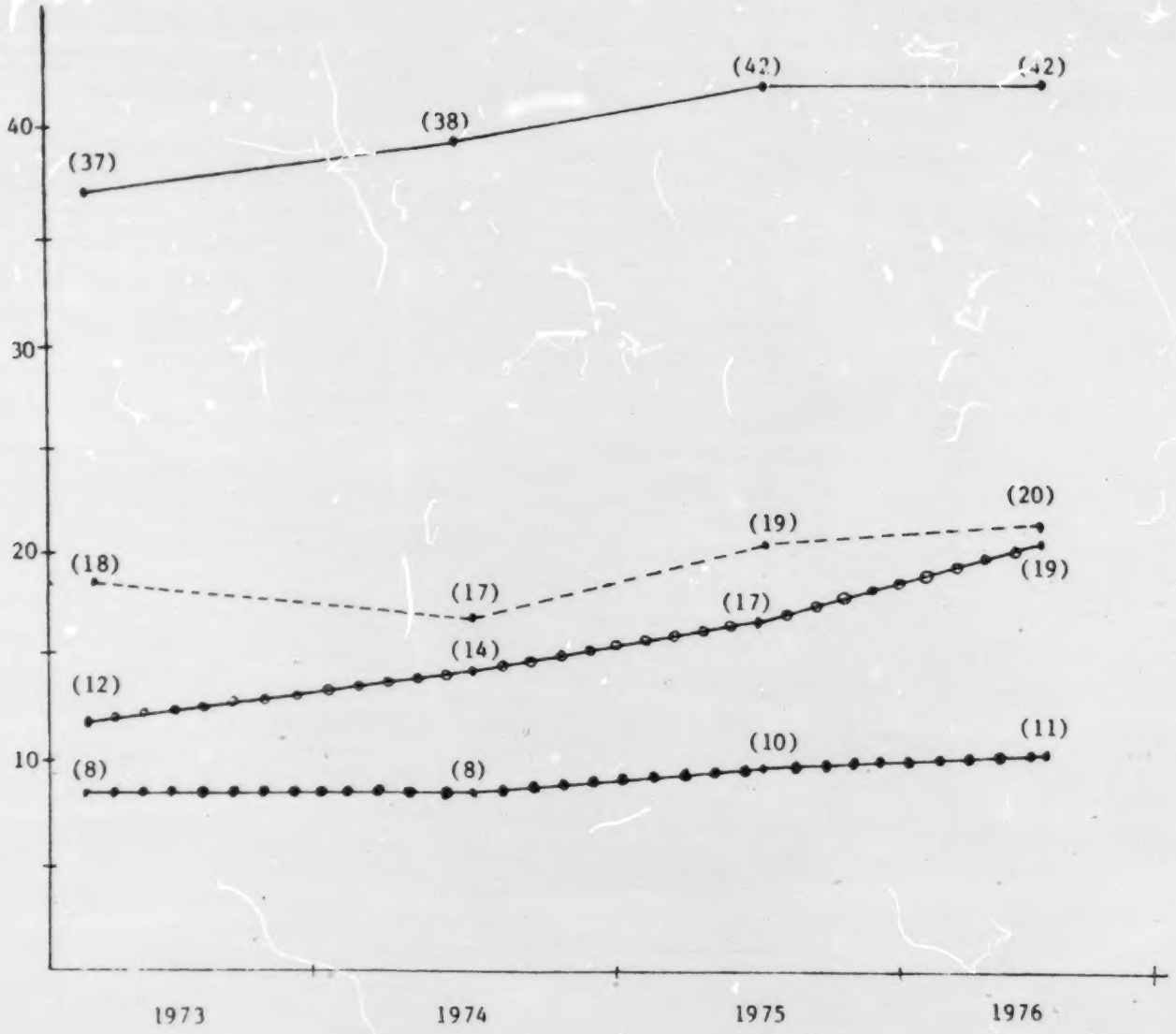
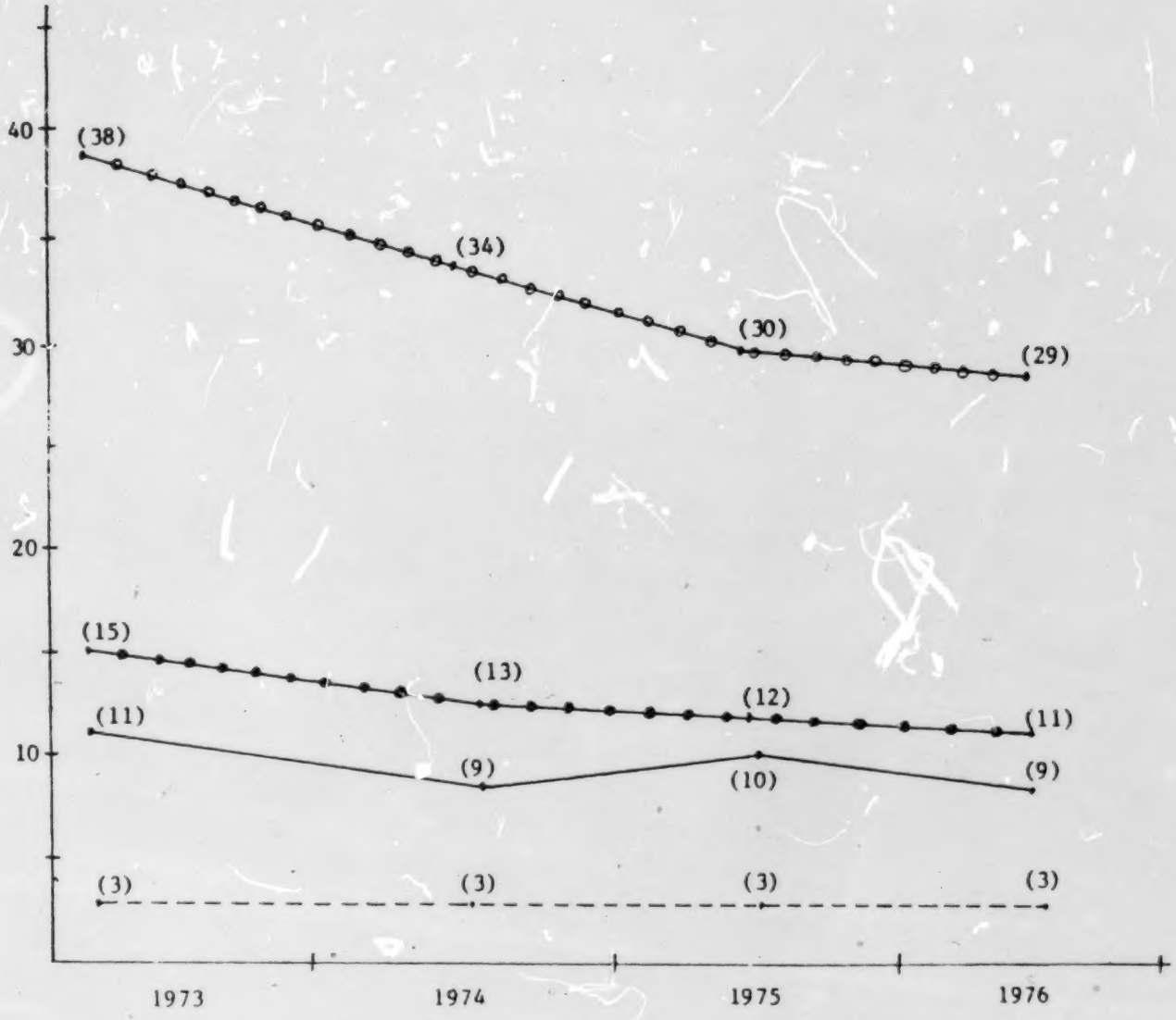


FIGURE 3
PAGE -8B-

Percentage of Respondents Indicating Education

As Probable Field of Study



Regarding "Education," a reverse trend is noted. BGSU freshman women who selected "Education" represented slightly more than twice the percentage of women in the national survey group. Our freshman men approximated the national male more closely, showing an increase of 6% above the national sample.

In addition, BGSU freshmen responded "Health Professions" with an average frequency of 7%. This represents a very slight difference from the high of 8% in 1974.

3. Probable Career Occupation

In 1973, 18% of the Bowling Green freshmen selected "Business Management" or "Business" as probable career occupations. In 1976, this percentage of response increased to 27% exceeding the national group response rate of 16%.

Education, as a field combining elementary and secondary positions, has remained one of the more popular career occupations among Bowling Green freshmen as evidenced by its somewhat consistent selection over the four-year period: (1) 18% in 1973, (2) 18% in 1974, (3) 16% in 1975, (4) 19% in 1976. The national response pattern appears to vary from two to seven times fewer students selecting Education.

IV. What Are the Estimates of Freshmen Concerning their Experience at BGSU?

When asked in which kinds of experiences Bowling Green freshmen "estimate their chances are very good," they decreasingly believe they will "be satisfied with college" (see Table 1, page 9A). Compared to 64% of the BGSU respondents who made this response in 1973, only 55% of the 1976 BGSU freshmen checked this response. Fifty-seven percent of the national norm group made the same response in 1976.

Table 1

Students estimate chances are very good that they will:	1973 Total	1974 Total	1975 Total	1976 Total	1976 National Norm Data
Get a Bachelor's degree	77*	73	78	77	80
Be satisfied with college	64	61	61	55	57
Find a job in preferred field	58	54	63	63	62
Make at least a "B" average	36	38	44	42	48
Work at outside job	23	24	23	16	18
Enroll in honors courses	5	5	NA**	NA	NA
Change major field	18	15	15	13	14
Change career choice	17	15	15	13	13
Join a sorority or fraternity	19	17	20	17	19
Seek vocational counseling	11	11	12	8	8

* Percentage of respondents
** Item not included on questionnaire

Another interesting pattern has emerged. An average of 15% of BGSU freshmen over the four years believed chances are very good that they will "change major field." Additionally, an average of 15% estimated similar chances concerning their changing "career choice." One possible interpretation of this result is that nearly 85% of our freshmen think that they will not change such decisions, regardless of the tentativeness of some of their choices.

V. A. Freshman Student Objectives

Perhaps no construct is more important, in the long term, than objectives considered "essential or very important" by freshmen coming to the University. One can probably assume that the closer student objectives are allied to those of faculty and other members of the academic community, the more all participants will agree upon common endeavors. It would seem that without a sense of shared values, people, if not opposed to each other, are certainly working apart from each other. Hence, the degree of cooperation or conflict between students and others should be more easily understood when one considers the inital objectives of freshmen as listed in Table 2.

"Becoming an authority in my field" ranked first among our freshmen overall. Seventy-one percent of them said this is either "very important or essential." "Helping others who are in difficulty" ranked second overall; 65% of our freshmen gave this response. However, women rated this item first; 72% of BGSU women deemed this "essential or very important." "Developing a meaningful philosophy of life" ranked third overall; 63% of our freshmen cited this response category. The 1976 ranking for this item represents a change. In 1973, 72% of our freshmen rated this item first and "becoming an authority in my field" ranked third.

Table 2: Objectives Considered Essential or Very Important

ITEM	YEAR	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Be An Authority In My Field	1973	69	62	64
	1974	69	60	63
	1975	75	70	72
	1976	73	70	71
	National Norms	74	71	72
Influence Political Structure	1973	15	8	11
	1974	14	7	9
	1975	18	8	12
	1976	16	9	12
	National Norms	21	13	17
Having Administrative Responsibility for the Work of Others	1973	30	19	23
	1974	27	19	22
	1975	39	26	31
	1976	35	28	31
	National Norms	33	27	31
Being Well Off Financially	1973	65	42	51
	1974	59	31	40
	1975	57	38	45
	1976	61	40	48
	National Norms	60	43	52
Becoming Accomplished (Achieve in a Performing Art)	1973	65	42	51
	1974	10	12	11
	1975	10	13	12
	National Norms	10	13	12
Influencing Social Values	1973	26	31	29
	1974	23	27	25
	1975	26	29	28
	1976	23	32	29
	National Norms	27	31	29
Rasing a Family	1973	56	60	58
	1974	57	62	60
	1975	59	62	61
	1976	59	63	62
	National Norms	56	55	55
Writing Original Works	1973	--	--	--
	1974	10	12	11
	1975	11	13	12
	1976	8	11	10
	National Norms	12	16	14

CON'T

ITEM	YEAR	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Helping Others in Difficulty	1973	54	73	65
	1974	50	71	64
	1975	53	75	67
	1976	50	72	65
	National Norms	55	71	63
Being Successful in Your Own Business	1973	48	24	33
	1974	45	22	30
	1975	53	28	37
	1976	50	28	36
	National Norms	52	28	44
Being Involved in Environmental Clean-Up	1973	28	24	26
	1974	19	18	18
	1975	22	20	21
	1976	21	20	20
	National Norms	29	27	28
Develop a Meaningful Philosophy of Life	1973	67	75	72
	1974	57	65	62
	1975	61	69	66
	1976	23	36	31
	National Norms	63	69	66
Participating in a Community Action Program	1973	23	32	29
	1974	23	32	29
	1975	26	35	32
	1976	23	36	31
	National Norms	26	35	31
Keeping up with Political Affairs	1973	45	42	43
	1974	42	38	39
	1975	45	38	40
	1976	42	36	38
	National Norms	48	43	45
Obtaining Recognition from One's Colleagues	1973	--	--	--
	1974	38	29	32
	1975	45	38	40
	1976	42	40	41
	National Norms	51	45	48
Theoretical Contribution to Science	1973	--	--	--
	1974	8	6	7
	1975	9	6	7
	1976	9	6	7
	National Norms	20	13	17
Creating Artistic Work	1973	--	--	--
	1974	6	16	13
	1975	10	19	16
	1976	8	18	14
	National Norms	10	19	14

Over the four-year period, other objectives which consistently received increases in emphasis from BGSU freshmen were "having administrative responsibility for the work of others" (23% in 1973 to 31% in 1976) and "obtaining recognition from one's colleagues" (32% in 1974 to 41% in 1976). These trends reflect other attempts to characterize today's college students as having a concentration on self, occupational status, and achievement. For example, Kaplan, in Change,* characterized today's students as seeking individual self-fulfillment. Eddy, in Educational Record, viewed students as "pragmatic."** If the BGSU findings can be translated into the premise that students are more concerned with their occupational and professional status, then our freshmen are consistent with the Kaplan and Eddy theories.

While such a profile may be accurate, the need to accomplish financial well-being has not increased significantly: 48% of the 1976 BGSU freshmen thought it was important to be "very well off financially" as compared to 51% in 1973. Men are more likely to see this as an objective than are women (61% men and 40% women in 1976).

At the same time, objectives related to being involved as an active participant in society have remained fairly stable; although in some instances these have been losing ground. The responses to the items "influence political structure" (1976, 12%), "participating in a community action program" (1976, 31%), and "influencing social values" (1976, 29%) have remained within close percentage points of

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* Kaplan, M., "The Ideologies of 'Tough Times,'" Change, Vol. 8, No. 7, August, 1976, pp 22-31.

** Eddy, E., "What Happened to Student Values?", Educational Record, Vol. 58, No. 1, Winter, 1977, pp7-17.

each other over the four years. Meanwhile, the objectives "keeping up with political affairs" (1973, 43%; 1976, 38%) and "being involved in environmental clean-up" (1973, 26%; 1976, 20%) have been decreasing. If this portrayal of students as rather passive citizens is accurate, it strikes us as a characteristic worthy of attention. To what degree can students be encouraged not only to become educated about the affairs of the Republic, but at least minimally active in social, political, and community concerns?

Overall, the data suggests that students do see their professional and occupational status and success as more important, and view the development of a philosophy of life and the maintenance of socially and politically-oriented activity as less important. Thus, the data reflect current popular observation.

B. Political Observation

BGSU students, as well as national norm groups, stay away from including themselves in extreme political orientations. These data are arrayed in Table 3. Very few students were found in both the "far left" and the "far right" designation. In 1976, 60% of the Bowling Green students placed themselves in the "middle of the road" category (men 55% and women 65%). This was an increase over the 1973 average percentage of 56%. The "conservative" category remained about the same overall (14% in 1973 and 15% in 1976); however, this tended to disguise an increase among men (14% to 19%). The increases in these categories seemed to come from the numbers of students less inclined to characterize themselves as "liberal." In 1973, 28% of the incoming freshmen considered themselves liberal; in 1976, 22% of the students did so. Much of this decrease is attributable to men, whereas, in 1973, 34% of them chose liberal, in 1976, only 23% selected this designation.

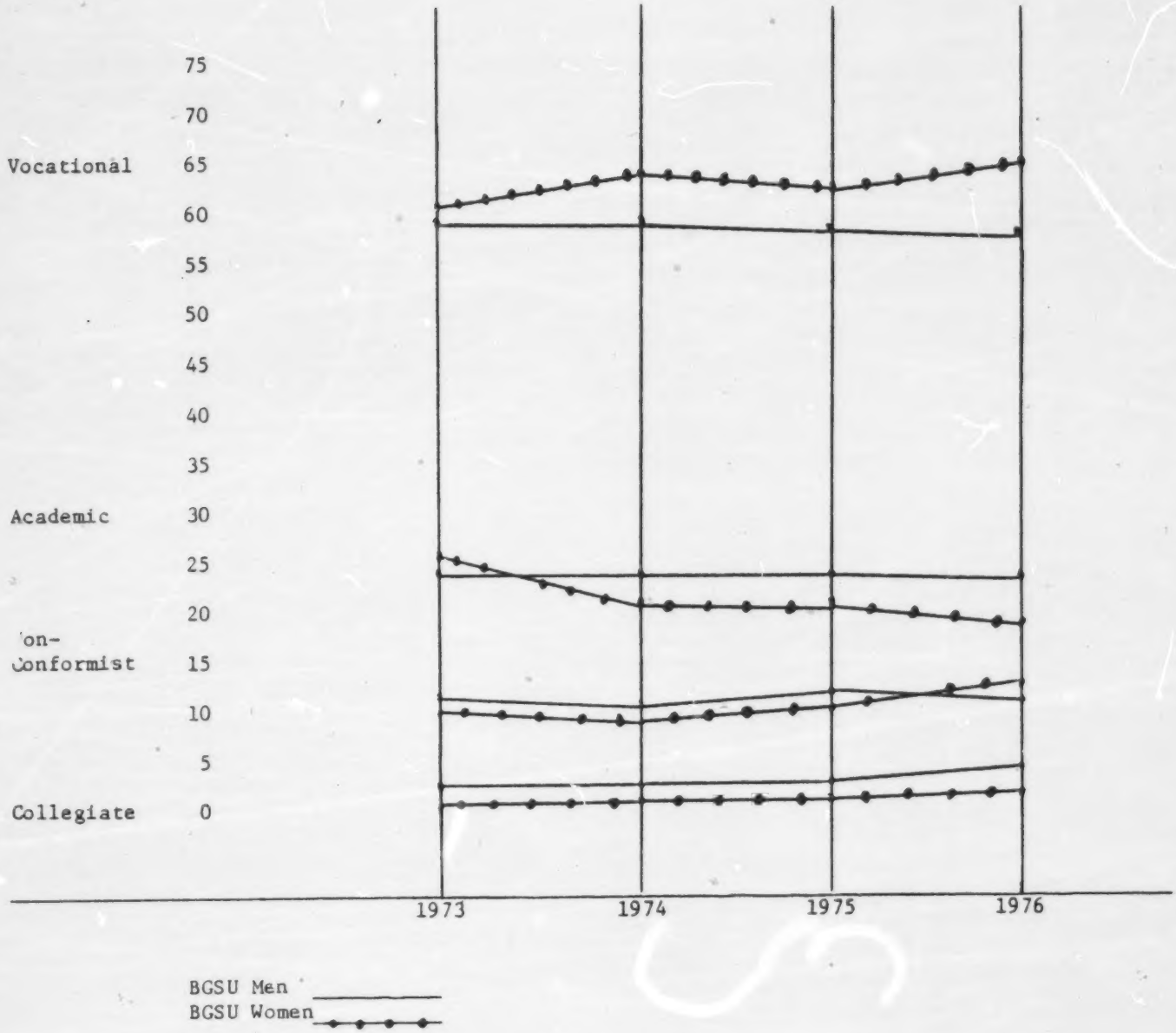
TABLE 3

Political Orientations of Incoming Students*

Orientation	Year	Men	Women	Total	National
Far Left	1973	1	.6	.8	2
	1976	2	.6	.9	2
Liberal	1973	34	25	28	36
	1976	23	22	22	29
Middle of the Road	1973	50	60	56	48
	1976	55	64	61	53
Conservative	1973	14	14	14	14
	1976	19	13	15	16
Far Right	1973	.4	.1	.2	.4
	1976	.7	.2	.4	.7

*Percentages

Figure 4: Student Orientations - (Percentages)



VI. General Attitudes of BGSU Freshmen

Historically, much of the attention given to the National ACE Survey by the press has focused on student attitudes towards specific issues. Most of these issues are college-related, but many of them have been general societal concerns; e.g., busing, marijuana, and constitutional rights. The 1976 survey listed 29 of these items as statements with which students could either agree or disagree. The percentages discussed here refer to those students who either agree "strongly" or "somewhat" with the statements put before them. Because all the items have not been presented to freshmen every year, we have limited our discussion to those items which have appeared several times in succession and to those items which have appeared of interest to most people. The items and their respective percentages are listed in Table 4.

In general, more of our freshmen believe in obeying laws, regardless of their own personal values. In 1974, 27% of BGSU freshmen agreed that "people should not obey the laws which violate their personal values." This compared with 24% of the students who agreed with this statement in 1976. Women tended to agree with this statement more than men (29% men and 21% women in 1976).

On the issue of the role of women in today's society, several statements were included. On the item "the activities of married women are best confined to the home and family, some changes have occurred. What appeared to be a trend of fewer men agreeing with this statement in 1975 has been reversed in 1976. Surprisingly, this was also accompanied by an increase in 1976 of women agreeing with this statement.

A related item stated: "women should receive the same salary and opportunities for advancement as men in comparable positions." There has been no change on this issue; 94% to 95% of the students have agreed with this statement over the four years of the survey.

In 1976, 40% of the BGSU respondents agreed that "a couple should live together for some time before deciding to get married." This item appeared the last three years and resulted in a contrast between male and female responses. Almost one-half of the males consistently agreed with this statement, while only about one-third of the females agreed. There is a slight increasing trend among the females across the last three years (1974, 32%; 1976, 36%). Percentages of BGSU freshmen overall are consistently below national norms by about 10% on this item: "if two people really like each other, it's all right for them to have sex even if they have known each other only for a short time." In 1976, 63% of the BGSU men agreed with this statement as compared with 24% of the BGSU women. This was very similar to the 1973 data and these results reversed slight increases in 1974 for both men and women. While the data reflect fairly stable attitudes towards male-female relationships, they also point up substantial differences between men and women. Such differences have been maintained over the last three years.

In 1976, 45% of the freshmen agreed that "marijuana should be legalized." Historically, there has always been a moderate difference between men and women on the issue, but the differences have been smaller: in 1973, 14% more of the men agreed with this statement than did women, while in 1976 the difference was only 6% (men 48% and women 42%). Again, women students seem to be displaying a changing attitude.

One would hope that people leaving college would not feel helpless as they face society that college provides people with a feeling that they can be effective change agents. During the first three years of the survey both BGSU freshman men and women agreed increasingly with the statement "realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society." In effect, we interpret the data to indicate an increasing pessimism among our freshmen. Overall, BGSU freshmen agreed with this statement 47% of the time in 1975 compared with 38% in 1973. However, this percentage reverted to 43% in 1976. This recent "increase" was consistent among men, women, and the national norm responses.

One clear trend with no indication of ambivalence is on the issue of college grades. Bowling Green freshmen showed a dramatic drop in agreement across the four years with the statement: "college grades should be abolished." Overall, 35% of our freshmen agreed with this statement in 1973; however, only 19% of them agreed with this in 1976. This closely parallels an equal drop in national norms from 33% to 18% for the same four-year period.

Over the four years of the study, about one-fifth of the freshmen have consistently agreed with the notion that "colleges would be improved if organized sports were de-emphasized." This has been a fairly stable response among all freshmen.

To hear controversial speakers have also been an assumed right, if not a privilege of college students. Apparently not all college students agree. Overall, 20% of the national and BGSU freshmen agree with the statement: "college officials have the right to ban persons with extreme views from speaking on campus." On the issue of college policies toward socially disadvantaged students, about 30% of the students over the last four years have agreed with the statement: "students from disadvantaged social background

should be given preferential treatment in college admissions." On both of these issues there is not only real stability among BGSU students, but also amazing closeness to the national norm, 19% and 30% respectively.

It is difficult to generalize about student attitudes toward these basic issues because of the many different domains represented by the survey items. What do items relating to equal pay and educational opportunity have in common? It would be pure speculation at this point to identify commonalities among such items. On the other hand, some summary of changing attitudes can be made. Students agree less and less with attempts to abolish grading systems. This is at least one indication that the attitudes that students have toward grades is one that they do not necessarily adopt in college, but one they bring with them to college!

The data also suggest that some attitudes are not quite so "settled in." Attitudes toward the role of married women and one's ability to change society have both increased and decreased within the four years -- an indication that these attitudes are still malleable and not concretely established among entering students.

One quite safe conclusion, though, can be drawn. Entering men and women may seldom exhibit large attitudinal changes between the years, but there are often significant differences between the ways the two groups responded to certain issues, especially those related to the interpersonal arena such as sex and living together.

VII. General Orientation

Since 1973 we have presented BGSU freshmen with a series of optional questions designed to supplement those asked in the ACE Survey. The purpose of these questions has been to more completely understand the general personality orientations of Bowling Green freshmen. Five of the ten questions administered are considered here since they are useful supplements to previous points.*

The first of these was a shortened version of the Clark-Trow Typology in which students are asked to select one of four primary orientations to college: Vocational, Academic, Collegiate, or Non-Conformist. In graphic fashion, the trends for Bowling Green men and women are arrayed in Figure 4, Page 12B. The description for each of these orientations follows:

Vocational

I am committed to a particular field of study and am in college primarily to obtain training for my chosen career.

Academic

I am primarily concerned with the scholarly pursuit of knowledge and the cultivation of the intellect.

Collegiate

I am primarily concerned with the social and extracurricular activities of college life.

Non-Conformist

I am committed to a philosophy that emphasizes individualistic interests and styles, concerns for personal identity, and contempt for many aspects or organized society.

* Several requests have been received asking that these items be more practical-oriented. These requests are being considered and should result in a new set of optional items administered to the freshmen during 1978.

Table 4: General Attitudes; Agreement with Statement (%)

Item	Year	Men	Women	Total	National Norms
People should not obey laws which violate their personal values	1974	29	26	27	33
	1975	30	23	25	31
	1976	29	21	24	30
A couple should live together for some time before deciding to get married	1974	50	32	38	46
	1975	49	33	39	47
	1976	48	36	40	50
If two people really like each other, it's all right for them to have sex even if they've known each other for only a very short time.	1974	61	22	36	46
	1975	65	27	40	51
	1976	64	24	38	50
Marijuana should be legalized	1973	49	35	41	51
	1974	48	39	42	47
	1975	52	41	45	49
	1976	48	42	45	51
Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society.	1973	43	35	38	40
	1974	50	42	44	42
	1975	53	44	47	47
	1976	45	41	43	42
College grades should be abolished	1973			35	33
	1974			28	27
	1975			24	22
	1976			19	18
Colleges would be improved if organized sports were de-emphasized	1973			18	25
	1974			22	29
	1975			24	28
	1976			21	27
The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family	1973	39	16	25	24
	1974	39	15	24	25
	1975	31	15	21	23
	1976	35	19	24	23

Table 4 (con't): General Attitudes; Agreement with Statement (%)

Item	Year	Men	Women	Total	National Norms
Women should receive the same salary and opportunities for advancement as men in comparable positions	1973	90	97	94	94
	1974	91	96	94	93
	1975	89	97	94	94
	1976	90	97	95	94
College officials have the right to ban persons with extreme views from speaking on campus	1973	21	17	19	18
	1974	19	15	17	18
	1975	21	20	21	19
	1976	22	19	20	20
Students from disadvantaged social backgrounds should be given preferential treatment in college admission	1973	30	30	30	33
	1974	32	30	31	32
	1975	30	30	30	30
	1976	33	28	29	30

It is clear from the graph that the Vocational response has been chosen most frequently by both men and women entering BGSU. In fact, women in 1976 chose the response more than men and in an increasing fashion. In 1976, 67% of the women and 60% of the men chose the Vocational orientation. Women, on the other hand, have become less likely to choose the Academic orientation. The 1976 data showed 23% of the men selected Academic as opposed to 18% of the women. Freshmen selecting the Non-Conformist orientation remained around 10-11% for the last four years with little deviation. Few Bowling Green freshmen choose the Collegiate orientation. However, men do outnumber women in this area, almost two to one (6% men and 3% women).

Overall, the data indicate a strong primary orientation toward college as a place to prepare for a career, with a certain segment of students leaning toward an Academic orientation, and a smaller group preferring the Non-Conformist designation.

Next, we asked students how much they thought about the questions, "Who am I, what do I want, what will I become?" Since only 2% or less of the students said they do not think about such questions at all, we arrayed the percentages of only the first three responses: "A great deal," "frequently," and "rarely." Accompanying this response has been a slightly increasing number of men who responded "rarely." In general, over the four years about 80-85% of our incoming freshmen tended to think either "frequently" or "very much" about the question, "Who am I, what do I want, and what will I become?"

Table 5: Responses to the Questions: "How much have you thought about the questions, "Who Am I? What Do I Want? What Will I Become?" (Percentages)

Response	Year	Men	Women
A Great Deal	1973	22	21
	1974	23	24
	1975	19	22
	1976	21	23
Frequently	1973	61	66
	1974	60	63
	1975	60	62
	1976	58	65
Rarely	1973	15	11
	1974	16	13
	1975	18	14
	1976	18	11

One of the frequent debates about college impact involves the relationship of the student to the teacher. Studies done on this topic assert (e.g., The Impact of College Professors)* that educational outcomes are directly related to faculty contact, i.e., the more contact, the more one benefits from college. The recent Alumni Attitude Survey** of BGSU graduates found that most alumni wish they had a more personal relationship with faculty and, in general, more contact with them. Bowling Green freshmen were given a question relevant to this topic:

> "Some students want more from a teacher than competence or even brillance in teaching. They want a broader and more personal relationship with someone they can see and talk with about matters not related to school or course work. Is this something you want in a relationship with a teacher?"

wo of the five responses, "don't think I would like it" and "I'm sure I don't want it," have received only one to two percent of the freshman responses since 1973. We have presented below the three responses usually selected. There is a very slight decline among freshmen who responded "very much" but on the whole, about 60% who said "not crucial" revised their opinions after the freshman year. It is something seen as more desirable once one enters college or leaves; 7-10% of the freshmen on the other hand, said they "really don't care."

One of the assertions about the effects of college is that students become less absolute and less dogmatic as they progress through their college years; their perceptions become more relative. If so, BGSU faculty may have to work harder than ever before as there seems to be an increasing

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* Wilson, R., Gaff, J., et al., College Professors and Their Impact on Students, New York: John Wiley, 1975.

** Holmes, J.H., and Rentz, A.L., Alumni Attitude Survey, Bowling Green, 1977.

Table 6: Responses to Faculty-Student Relationship Question*

Response	Year	Men	Women
Is this something you want in a relationship with a teacher?			
Very much	1973	29	30
	1974	25	29
	1975	29	28
	1976	27	27
Nice, but not crucial	1973	62	62
	1974	63	62
	1975	60	63
	1976	60	62
Really don't care	1973	7	6
	1974	10	7
	1975	8	6
	1976	11	7

*Percentages

trend toward saying, "I tend to believe that things are categorized into good or bad, right or wrong." This is the case even though the majority of students disagreed with this statement (1976, men 50%; 1976, women 59%).

In general, except for the trend toward favoring grades, this is one of the stronger response patterns. Freshmen agreed increasingly more often with the absolutist position that things are "either right or wrong or good or bad."

The issue of control was also included among the supplemental questions. It has been assumed that people will have less anxiety and experience less alienation if they feel they can control their environment. Earlier, we noted that many freshmen did not feel they could affect society. This is a somewhat similar issue. Most freshmen (1976, men 77% and 1976, women 81%) agreed with this statement: "Realistically, I believe I will have little control over what my experience will be like at this university." A slight decrease in 1974 was reversed and it appears that most students over the years feel they will have little control over their environment. The average percentage of our freshmen who believe they will have considerable control is 21%.

TABLE 7

Item	Year	Men	Women
I tend to believe things can be categorized into Good or Bad, or Right or Wrong.	1973	39	32
	1974	44	37
	1975	44	39
	1976	50	41
Realistically, I believe I will have little control over what my experience will be like at this University.	1973	76	83
	1974	76	80
	1975	78	80
	1976	77	81

CONCLUSION

The BGSU Freshman Student

What has become clear as a result of the review of the four years of data from BGSU freshmen (nearly 12,000) is that we have an incredibly stable population of incoming students. Our students year after year exhibit characteristics quite similar to their predecessors. If asked for a focus of descriptors or characteristics of "typical" Bowling Green freshmen, the following statements would reflect such a profile of stability.

Representatively speaking, Bowling Green freshman students, more of whom are women than men:

*are the "traditional" student; i.e., college immediately after high school, academic average of B+;

*choose Business or Education as probable fields of major study;

*believe in the use of grades in college;

*possess a low academic self-concept in comparison to others; e.g., self-ratings of academic ability, math and writing ability, originality and intellectual self-confidence;

*perceive that they have little control over their collegiate experience;

*have aspirations toward graduate study (less than 50%);

*rate themselves as "middle-of-the-road" politically;

*rate parental input as significant in their decisions to attend college and which institution to attend.

CHANGES FROM 1973 TO 1976

Among all the material discussed in previous sections of this report, the following trends are examples of changes that have occurred during the four-year period, 1973 to 1976. They seem to be particularly worthy of mention. Generally, Bowling Green freshmen students:

*increasingly come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds;

*increasingly apply to and are accepted by other post-secondary educational institutions in addition to BGSU;

*decreasingly cite "academic reputation" as a factor influencing their choice of BGSU (with no other factor receiving an increasing rating);

*decreasingly expect to be satisfied with their collegiate experience;

*increasingly rate themselves as politically conservative;

*increasingly preceive issues or attitudes existing within a right vs. wrong paradigm;

*increasingly value "becoming an authority in my field" as one of the objectives they consider essential or very important;

*decreasingly value "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" as on objective they consider essential or very important;

*decreasingly see themselves as actively involved citizens in society now or in the future.

GENERAL COMMENT

In this section, we have chosen to highlight some of the changes described earlier in the report. In proportion to the number of items asked on the freshman questionnaire, we maintain there have been relatively few changes in response. Because we emphasized them in this report they may appear to be equal to the more stable characteristics listed under the student profile. However, as our readings suggests that several factors may account for the few changes in responses that were found during the period 1973-1976.

One major factor that appears to be gaining strength over the four-year period under our microscope is a return to traditionalism. We see evidence to support the belief that among our freshmen, the reactions, attitudes, and responses that characterized students of the 1950's are apparently acceptable today. Today's student is conforming to a larger group's mores, much less interested in assuming an active role when presented with societal issues or concerns than the studies of the 1960's. Although some particular items on the Freshman Survey may not follow this pattern, most reflect this traditional outlook. For example, men and women are agreeing more with the following statement than was apparent earlier: "the activities of married women are best confined to the home and family." This factor may also represent a set of values learned from parents who themselves were born in the mid-1930's and who spent their high school days living through World War II, its effect on the American society and the later events associated with the first days of Sputnik.

Another major factor that appears to have had an effect on BGSU freshmen is a concentration on or concern with "entry-level job preparation." Some people may align this concern with the recent visibility of career education programs. Career education, however, is generally concerned with fostering a life-long developmental perspective toward a career and generally helping one learn skills and attain competencies that will allow an individual to define such a career by a series of jobs assumed at different ages. Most freshmen tend to view the collegiate educational experience as one that only prepares them for their first job after graduation. They do not see a need or a value in preparing themselves for a life time involvement with the world of work or "developing a philosophy of life," for example.

Similarly, freshmen do not perceive the college years as one which will train them to be able to continue their education beyond the baccalaureate degree. The implications of this particular theme for general education at Bowling Green cannot be overstated. In addition, the fact that fewer freshman students aspire to earn graduate degrees, here or elsewhere, may mark the beginning of a period of needed re-evaluation of the purpose of undergraduate courses and the significance attached to the effective teaching of them.

A third factor, perhaps a minor one in comparison with the others, is related to women's identity and/or role within society. Since the resurgence of the women's liberation movement in the early 1960's, women have been increasingly concerned with defining themselves and their aspirations in their own terms rather than accepting a definition that is sex-linked and put upon them by others. However, among our freshman women, this new self-determined definition of personhood appears to be still in the stage of emergence.

IMPLICATIONS

The following five implications are presented with the intention that they will stimulate discussion of the four-year data base described throughout this report:

*To formulate assumptions about Bowling Green freshman students based on national surveys of freshmen or grounded in readings generated by broad survey research may not be valid. Our freshmen often appear to be different when compared to larger freshman groups, i.e., American Council on Education's Freshmen Survey. More particularly, assumptions which tend to equate our freshman men with our freshman women or which tend to imply that their reactions are identical may also be invalid.

*To be conscious of the Bowling Green freshman's lower academic self-concept may not be sufficient. The crucial question is: "What can the University do to create change in the relatively low academic self-concept of its entering freshmen?"

*The assumption that the goals held by our faculty and those of our undergraduate students are similar may not be true. We may be experiencing the beginning of a goal conflict between these two groups evidenced in part by the decreasing percentage of our freshmen who aspire to graduate education and who value less those objectives generally allied with a university research mission.

*The assumption that a university should teach or concern itself with the education of a student who will be a rational and humanistic contributor to society may not be fully shared, but for those who believe in it, much work needs to be done. The increasing perception on the part of students that things can be viewed as either right or wrong and the decline in participation in social

issues support the theory that BGSU could be assuming an active a role as possible in this area.

*The assumption that future freshman classes will be similar in nature to the past four classes may be valid, if not assured. If this is the case, then planning for future student generations and their desired curricula should be predictable. However, if the University is desirous of changing the profile of the typical Bowling Green freshman, as described here, then the University itself will have to create the changes it desires. These changes do not seem to be happening now. This may mean developing new curricula, modifying existing programs, using different recruiting strategies and/or creating new ways to market BGSU and its graduates. On the other hand, the University may be satisfied with the current BGSU Freshman Profile; if so, the only remaining question is can this profile be maintained through the 1980's?